

## Enhancing Global Recognition for Canadian Research Excellence

### Paths to Success

A major initiative inspired by His Excellency, the Right Honourable David Johnston, is to boost Canada's research profile on the global stage. To increase this international recognition, a committee chaired by His Excellency agreed that a strategy needed to be developed to ensure more scholars and scientists are nominated for major awards.

The strategy has three components:

1. **Support:** The presidents of the three federal granting councils agreed to support the efforts of universities, hospitals, research institutes and corporate and government laboratories [institutions] by developing an inventory of international research awards and creating the position of Interagency Coordinator to assist in developing compelling dossiers.
2. **Talent Scouting:** A canvassing committee, "talent scouts" was set up to identify potential outstanding nominees for international awards and to connect with the candidate's institution to effect the nomination process.
3. **Institutional:** Have responsibility in identifying worthy nominees through their own internal processes or acting on nominees identified by the canvassing committee, drafting nominations and submitting those nominations to the Interagency Coordinator.

### Roles and Best Practices

What follows is a description of the roles and best practices by key participants- nominee, nominator, and their organizations in building the case for success.

#### Nominee

- Early stages of career

In the early stages of a top researcher's career, she or he should be nominated for:

- (a) awards within his or her institution, company or laboratory
- (b) relevant national and provincial awards, (e.g., Early Researcher Award (Ontario)) including those by a professional society or association, granting agency or others.
- (c) Sloan Research Fellowships. Researchers in chemistry, computational or evolutionary molecular biology, computer science, economics, mathematics, neuroscience, ocean sciences, physics or a related field, should be nominated for an A.P. Sloan Research Fellowship. Only faculty at a U.S. or Canadian university are eligible for this prestigious fellowship, and the candidate must be nominated no more than 4-5 years after receipt of his / her Ph.D.

It is essential that excellent people be nominated early in their career, especially at the national level. Such practices demonstrate to the nominee the importance of a polished and current CV and provide opportunity to gain experience in preparing compelling dossiers for submission. The first draft of a nomination is best composed by the nominee, who has the expertise and

knowledge to showcase the contributions that are of greatest relevance to a particular award or prize.

- Years 6-12

Nominations should be made for:

- (a) relevant awards and prizes in Canada (e.g. NSERC Steacie Fellowship, member of a scholarly academy etc.), for recognition of a larger body of work, or for a landmark discovery or invention of significant impact on the research area, and on society in general.
- (b) Guggenheim fellowships which cover many fields of endeavour, from poetry to mechanical engineering, are highly regarded in their own right. While U.S. based, Canadians are eligible to apply and have had good success in competing for these prestigious Fellowships. Guggenheim fellows are often looked at favourably by selection committees for a number other top international awards and prizes. These nominations can be made in the 6-12 years of experience time frame, or after.
- (c) a considerable number of other international awards and prizes that leading (top 5-10 percent) Canadian researchers can aspire to.

- More than 12 years of experience

Nominations for a range of awards and prizes, from general to those focused in particular sub-fields of a discipline, should be pursued nationally and internationally, in parallel (e.g., Herzberg Canada gold medal in science and engineering, Wolf Prize, Nobel Prize).

### Nominator

#### *a) Universities*

The Executive Head of a post-secondary institution must lead the international awards and prizes initiative, demonstrating seriousness of purpose, allocating appropriate staff and resources, and setting goals and objectives (including mentoring and committed and sustained efforts to nominate qualified women) to maximize prospects for success. Operating oversight for efforts on awards and prizes is often delegated to the Vice-President, Research, or equivalent.

An effective internal infrastructure to support nominations will often have the following components:

- Office of the Vice-President, Research:
  - establishes a position of full-time (preferably) Coordinator for Awards and Prizes;
  - establishes and chairs the Coordinating Committee on Awards and Prizes [CCAP] with membership from chairs of Departmental or Faculty Awards and Prizes committees (see below). This committee prospects for names of potential nominees for awards and prizes

and challenges members to start working on the nominations at least six months in advance of the deadline date for receipt. The CCAP also shares best local practices, by organizing presentations by members on different aspects of the awards and prizes process.

- Coordinator:
  - solicits names, provides advice and feedback, and is the conduit for all submissions for awards and prizes;
  - encourages the development of the nomination file, discusses trends in international awards and prizes, etc., and engages Deans, to assure sustainable commitment to the process leading to greater success by the university, and thus increasing our international competitiveness as a nation in receiving international awards and prizes;
  - distributes an up-to-date list of awards and prizes- both international (similar to the list available at science.gc.ca) and Canadian – every 3 to 4 months, so that faculties, departments, centres, institutes and other units have current information, and can match names of candidates to specific awards and prizes.
  
- Deans of Faculties:
  - encourage each department to develop a career path for its faculty, a kind of ladder or pyramid showing academic / awards progression
  - encourage each department to set up a Departmental Awards and Prizes Committee, to consider awards and prizes for which colleagues are well-suited, and to work on persuading such colleagues to allow their names and nominations to go forward to compete for awards and prizes;
  - recommend to the coordinator, at least once a month, individuals who could be nominated for an award or prize in the next 6-12 months.

*b) Companies*

The CEO of a company which pursues research and innovation should establish an awards and prizes committee, chaired by the CEO or designate depending, in part, on the magnitude of research and innovation in the firm. The committee should function in a manner analogous to that described above for universities. A Coordinator for Awards and Prizes would be responsible to prepare nominations by working with directors and research group leaders.

*c) Hospital Research Institutes*

The President and CEO of a hospital should designate the scientific director of the hospital research institute as responsible for the awards and prizes nominations, and to serve as chair of its committee on prizes and awards. Members of the committee could include directors of different research units, amongst others. A Coordinator for Awards and Prizes should be appointed, with roles and responsibilities similar to those in universities, companies etc.

d) *Government Laboratories*

The Deputy Minister of a department having research laboratories (e.g., Agriculture and Agri-food Canada) and/or a research council (e.g., National Research Council) should designate the most appropriate senior administrator as chair of the awards and prizes committee and appoint a Coordinator for Awards and Prizes. The functions of both the committee and the coordinator would be similar to those described above.

External Review of Draft Nominations

- Draft nominations are sent to the Interagency Coordinator (currently, David Marchand, Senior Policy Advisor, CIHR) for external review, to position the nomination most favorably for success.
- The institution informs the Interagency Coordinator that a nomination package is forthcoming.
- Once informed, the Interagency Coordinator liaises with the appropriate granting agency, and secures from it the names of reviewers with expertise related to the award. Reviewers are selected from a pool of Canadian and international high-profile individuals successful in obtaining international awards and prizes, as well as from administrators involved in writing and assembling packages for past successful candidates.
- The Interagency Coordinator forwards the nomination package to several reviewers who assess the nominating package independently, and focus on the presentation of information, as well as on how to strengthen content, based on evaluation criteria for the award. When the Coordinator receives the reviews, he forwards them for consideration to the sender from the nominating institution.
- Following consideration of the comments by the reviewers, and any subsequent modifications, the final version of the nomination is submitted by the institution to the organization responsible for the award or prize.
- All aspects of the process are handled in a strictly confidential manner. Experience has demonstrated strict adherence to confidentiality.
- Nomination packages must be submitted to the Interagency Coordinator at least six weeks prior to the award or prize submission deadline. The agencies commit to providing feedback at least two weeks prior to the award or prize submission deadline.

Celebrating Success

While the foregoing sets out a process to assist in developing successful nominations, celebrating success is a critical component, a capstone in the awards initiative. The Executive Head is key in ensuring that the institution celebrates appropriately, both internally and externally.